



# NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

August 11, 2020



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Welcome to Navy History Matters—our weekly compilation of articles, commentaries, and blogs related to history and heritage. Every week we'll gather the top-interest items from a variety of media and social media sources and then link you to related content at NHHC's website ([history.navy.mil](http://history.navy.mil)), your authoritative source for Navy history.

## ★ Navy Breaks Ground on New Archival Complex

NHHC held a groundbreaking ceremony to mark the beginning of construction of a new operational archives and repository complex at the [Washington Navy Yard](#) in Washington, DC, Aug. 5. Chief of Naval Operations Adm. [Mike Gilday](#) was on hand to deliver the ceremonial first blow on demolition day to commemorate the start of construction. "This new project underscores the vital role the Naval History and Heritage Command serves in preserving our Navy's institutional memory," said Gilday. "With this archival complex, we will continue to remember and present an accurate history of our Navy and tell the stories of those who have gone before us for generations to come." The Navy is renovating the buildings so they meet Navy standards for the protection and care of the Navy's intellectual property and some of the Navy's most at-risk collections. The current facilities were built in 1851 and lack the appropriate environmental controls. For more, [read the article](#) by MC3 Randy Adams at [NHHC's website](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/news-and-events/news/2020/navy-breaks-ground-on-new-archival-complex.html>

## ★ WWII@75: Japanese Surrender

On Aug. 14, 1945, which came to be known as [V-J Day](#), the Japanese accepted the terms of the Potsdam Declaration and agreed to surrender, ending [World War II](#). The decision to surrender came after the Soviet Union declared war on Japan on Aug. 8, and the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. President Harry S. Truman decided to drop the bombs after planners estimated invading the Japanese homeland could take up to a year with unacceptable high casualties. Emperor Michinomiya Hirohito made the decision to surrender unconditionally on Aug. 10, and his recorded announcement to the Japanese nation was broadcasted four days later. The instrument of surrender was signed by representatives of the Allied and Japanese governments onboard [USS Missouri](#) in Tokyo Bay on Sept. 2.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nara-series/80-g/80-G-330000/80-G-332968.html>

## ★ Admiral Farragut Died 150 Years Ago

On Aug. 14, 1870, Adm. [David G. Farragut](#) died while visiting Portsmouth, NH. The son of a Spanish-American immigrant and [American Revolution](#) veteran, Farragut himself was a [Civil War](#) hero remembered for his bravery at the Battle of Mobile Bay. At the battle, he forced the passage of Forts Morgan and Gaines at the entrance to the bay and captured the Confederate ram [Tennessee](#) and the gunboat [Selma](#), during which he uttered his famous words, "Damn the torpedoes; full speed ahead!" Farragut served more than 59 years in the Navy. He was appointed midshipman on Dec. 17, 1810, and saw his first sea service off the coast of the United States on the frigate [Essex](#) in 1811. He attained the rank of commander on Sept. 7, 1841, and captain in 1855; he was commissioned rear admiral on July 16, 1862. President Abraham Lincoln created the rank of vice admiral for him on Dec. 31, 1864, and on July 25, 1866—by congressional act—he was commissioned admiral, the first officer of the U.S. Navy to hold that rank.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhnc-series/nh-series/NH-49000/NH-49521.html>

### ★ **Palos First to Transit Suez Canal**

On Aug. 11–12, 1870, 150 years ago, armed tug [Palos](#) became the first Navy ship to transit the Suez Canal. The ship departed Boston on June 20 for the Asiatic Station, steamed across the Atlantic and through the Mediterranean, and then arrived at Singapore, via Aden and Ceylon on Sept. 25. Following a brief stay at that port, the gunboat steamed to Hong Kong and for the next 22 years operated on the China and Japan coasts and inland waters protecting American interests. In May 1871, the warship sailed from Shanghai for Nagasaki, Japan, and then Korea as part of the Asiatic Squadron. While engaged in surveying the Salee River, *Palos* was fired upon by a Korean fort. Adm. John Rodgers waited ten days for an official apology and when none came, ordered *Palos*, gunboat [Monocacy](#), and a [650 man landing party](#) into action. The two warships captured the main Korean fort and then took four others the next day. The squadron departed the Korean coast on July 3 without renewing negotiations, but the show of force was ultimately helpful in opening the country to Western trade. *Palos* was decommissioned in July 1893.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-63000/NH-63655.html>

### ★ **Texas Commissioned**

On Aug. 15, 1895, 125 years ago, battleship [Texas](#) was commissioned. She was the first American, steel-hulled, second-class (34 guns) battleship. *Texas* was the first ship built in honor of the great [state of Texas](#) and was constructed in reaction to the acquisition of modern armored warships by several South American countries. Although building *Texas* was lengthy, and she was plagued by several accidents early in her career, *Texas* and her sister ship [Maine](#) were considered advancements in American naval design. On July 3, 1898, during the [Battle of Santiago](#), the Spanish fleet attempted to escape the American fleet. *Texas* immediately took four of the enemy ships under fire. While the battleship's main battery pounded *Vizcaya* and *Colon*, her secondary battery joined [Iowa](#) and [Gloucester](#) in battering two torpedo-boat destroyers. One by one, the larger Spanish destroyers fell out of action and succumbed to the combined fire of the American fleet. By the end of the day, the Spanish fleet had been annihilated. Just two weeks after the great naval victory, Santiago de Cuba fell, and a day later Santiago, Spain, surrendered.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/research/publications/documentary-histories/united-states-navy-s/joint-operations-san/illustrations/uss-texas.html>

### ★ **Fort Severn Transferred to U.S. Navy—175 Years Ago**

On Aug. 15, 1845, Fort Severn in Annapolis, MD, was transferred to the U.S. Navy. Through the efforts of the Secretary of the Navy [George Bancroft](#), the Naval School was established without Congressional funding at the ten-acre Army post on Oct. 10, 1845, with a class of 50 midshipmen and seven professors. The curriculum included mathematics, navigation, gunnery, steam, chemistry, English, natural philosophy, and French. In 1850, the Naval School became the [United States Naval Academy](#). A new curriculum went into effect requiring midshipmen to study at USNA for four years and to train aboard ships each summer. As the U.S. Navy grew over the years, USNA expanded. The campus of ten acres increased to 338. The original student body of 50 midshipmen grew to a brigade size of 4,000. Modern granite buildings replaced the old wooden structures of Fort Severn. Congress authorized USNA to begin awarding Bachelor of Science degrees in 1933. USNA later replaced the curriculum taken by all midshipmen with the present core curriculum and added 18 major fields of study, a wide variety of elective courses, and advanced study and research opportunities.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nara-series/kn-series/KN-10000/KN-10950.html>

### ★ **CNO Directs Consolidation of Navy Museums**

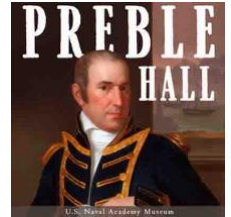
On Aug. 16, 2005, 15 years ago, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. [Michael G. Mullen](#) announced the consolidation of all [Navy museums](#) under the then-Naval Historical Center with the issuance of NAVADMIN 201/05. The Navy museum system realignment provided “more effective management of operations in the areas of manpower, collections preservation, accountability, exhibitions, and outreach, as well as addressing growing congressional interest in Department of Defense museum operations while continuing to encourage local foundation support and local command interest.” The change became effective later that year.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-95000/NH-95296.html>

### ★ Preble Hall Podcast

In a recent [naval history podcast](#) from Preble Hall, James Cheevers, who served as historian and senior curator of the U.S. Naval Academy Museum from 1967–2017, discusses the history of Annapolis through the [War of 1812](#). This lecture was a module for the 2016 inaugural class of the museum's Schoolhouse at Sea program. The [Preble Hall podcast](#), conducted by personnel at the [U.S. Naval Academy Museum](#) in Annapolis, MD, interviews historians, practitioners, military personnel, and other experts on a variety of naval history topics from ancient history to more current events. Also loaded recently is [From Belleau Wood to Guadalcanal: Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Thomas Holcomb](#), where Dr. David Ulbrich discusses the career of the legendary Marine Corps general.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.usna.edu/Museum/PrebleHall/>

### ★ Webpage of the Week

In celebration of the Navy [commissioning the newest littoral combat ship](#) *USS St. Louis* on Aug. 8, this week's Webpage of the Week is a recently updated page on NHHC's [DANFS index](#). On [Dec. 7, 1941](#), *USS St. Louis* was moored to the pier in the southwest lock of the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard when Japanese planes were sighted by observers onboard the ship. Within minutes, the ship was at general quarters, and her operable anti-aircraft guns were manned and firing on the attackers. By 8:06 a.m., preparations for getting underway had begun. At about 8:20 a.m., one of the cruiser's gun crews shot down its first enemy torpedo plane. By 9 a.m., two more enemy aircraft were shot down. At 09:31 a.m., *St. Louis* was headed for the south channel and the open sea to locate the enemy strike force but was unsuccessful. During [World War II](#), the ship participated in notable battles in the [Aleutians](#), [Kula Gulf](#), [Bougainville](#), [Saipan](#), [Philippine Sea](#), [Leyte Gulf](#), [Guam](#), and [Okinawa](#), earning 11 battle stars for her service.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/80-G-K-01000/80-G-K-1827.html>

### ★ Today in Naval History

On Aug. 11, 2001, [USNS Benavidez](#) was christened and launched at New Orleans, LA. The *Bob Hope*-class ship is part of [Military Sealift Command](#) that serves as dry cargo surge sealift carriers. The ship proudly bears the name of U.S. Army Master Sgt. Raul (Roy) Perez Benavidez, who [received the Medal of Honor](#) for a series of daring and extremely valorous actions during the [Vietnam War](#). On the morning of May 2, 1968, a 12-man Special Forces reconnaissance team met heavy enemy resistance and requested emergency extraction. Despite being wounded, Benavidez single-handedly rescued the team while simultaneously fighting off North Vietnamese soldiers. During the six hours of extraordinary heroism, Benavidez suffered a broken jaw and 37 bullet and bayonet puncture wounds.



*For more dates in naval history, including your selected span of dates, see [Year at a Glance](#) at [NHHC's website](#). Be sure to check this page regularly, as content is updated frequently.*

**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/browse-by-topic/people/namesakes/roy-benavidez.html>